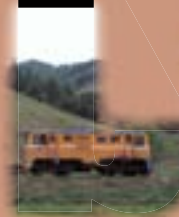


# TRANSPORTATION—Are We There Yet?

## High Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail

# transportation passenger **rail**



# High Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail

It is time for the United States to provide a robust intercity passenger network that provides competitive, reliable and frequent passenger service, comparable to world-class systems in other countries.

The nation has taken critical steps toward this goal with \$8 billion in economic recovery funding for high speed and intercity passenger rail, plus an additional appropriation of \$2.5 billion in FY 2010. The Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 authorized grants to the states for intercity passenger rail and also called for state and national rail plans.

The next two essential steps are passing a national rail policy and funding an intercity rail capital improvement program.

## National Rail Policy

AASHTO urges Congress to enact a National Rail Policy which outlines the importance to the country of there being a national rail network capable of moving passengers and freight effectively and efficiently. This policy should address the importance of a rail system that can help alleviate highway and airport system congestion, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and provide travel options for the public.

A National Rail Policy should address a national intercity passenger rail system which includes:

- **High-Speed Rail Corridors** (110 mph and above)—Corridors under 500 miles with travel demand, population density and congestion on competing modes warrant high-speed rail service.
- **Regional Corridors** (79–110 mph)—Corridors under 500 miles, with frequent, reliable service competing successfully with auto and air travel.
- **Long-Distance Service**—Corridors greater than 500 miles in order to provide basic connectivity and a balanced national transportation system.

## Capital Funding

Congress should create an Intercity Passenger Rail Account, funded from a diversified portfolio of new revenue, to provide dedicated, guaranteed funding (with budgetary treatment identical to the highway account, including firewalls, guaranteed spending, and contract authority) to states to meet their needs for capital improvements. Over the next six years investment should total \$35 billion.

Congress should:

- Authorize at least \$50 billion over six years for high speed and intercity passenger rail grants to states.
- Provide \$13 billion from General Fund Revenues to Amtrak for capital infrastructure improvements to bring the Northeast Corridor up to a state of good repair.
- Authorize a High-Speed Rail Grade Crossing Elimination Program at \$55 million per year.

In addition, other key steps include the following:

- Congress should provide a framework for negotiating passenger rail access on private freight railroads.
- Performance measures should be linked to policy objects at the national level and separate from awarding of grants for intercity passenger rail.
- Congress should continue and expand the Section 130 Grade Crossing Program and allow for half the cost of upgrading a crossing to be used as an incentive to close the crossing.

AASHTO supports federal tax credits for freight rail infrastructure improvements with a clearly defined public benefit such as intercity passenger rail.

